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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of black cultural centers on university campuses, focusing on whether black cultural centers or multicultural centers best meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body and society. It examines the historical role of black cultural centers as vehicles to promote educational opportunity, student retention, and ethnic solidarity on predominantly white university campuses. In then looks at the transition from black cultural centers to multicultural centers on many campuses, discussing sensitive issues related to the maintenance of black cultural centers. Using examples from the experience of Indiana University of Pennsylvania (IUP) in dealing with these issues, it argues that, despite budget cutbacks, universities need to preserve black cultural centers as unique institutions while seeking to create multicultural centers or programs to meet the needs of other minority students. Five appendixes outline the services of the IUP Black Cultural Center, the characteristics and operation of ethnic cultural centers, important points about cross-cultural relationships, and tips for working with culturally different students. (Contains 33 references.) (MDM)

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ED 383 273

# THE PRECARIOUS QUESTION OF BLACK CULTURAL CENTERS VERSUS MULTICULTURAL CENTERS

by

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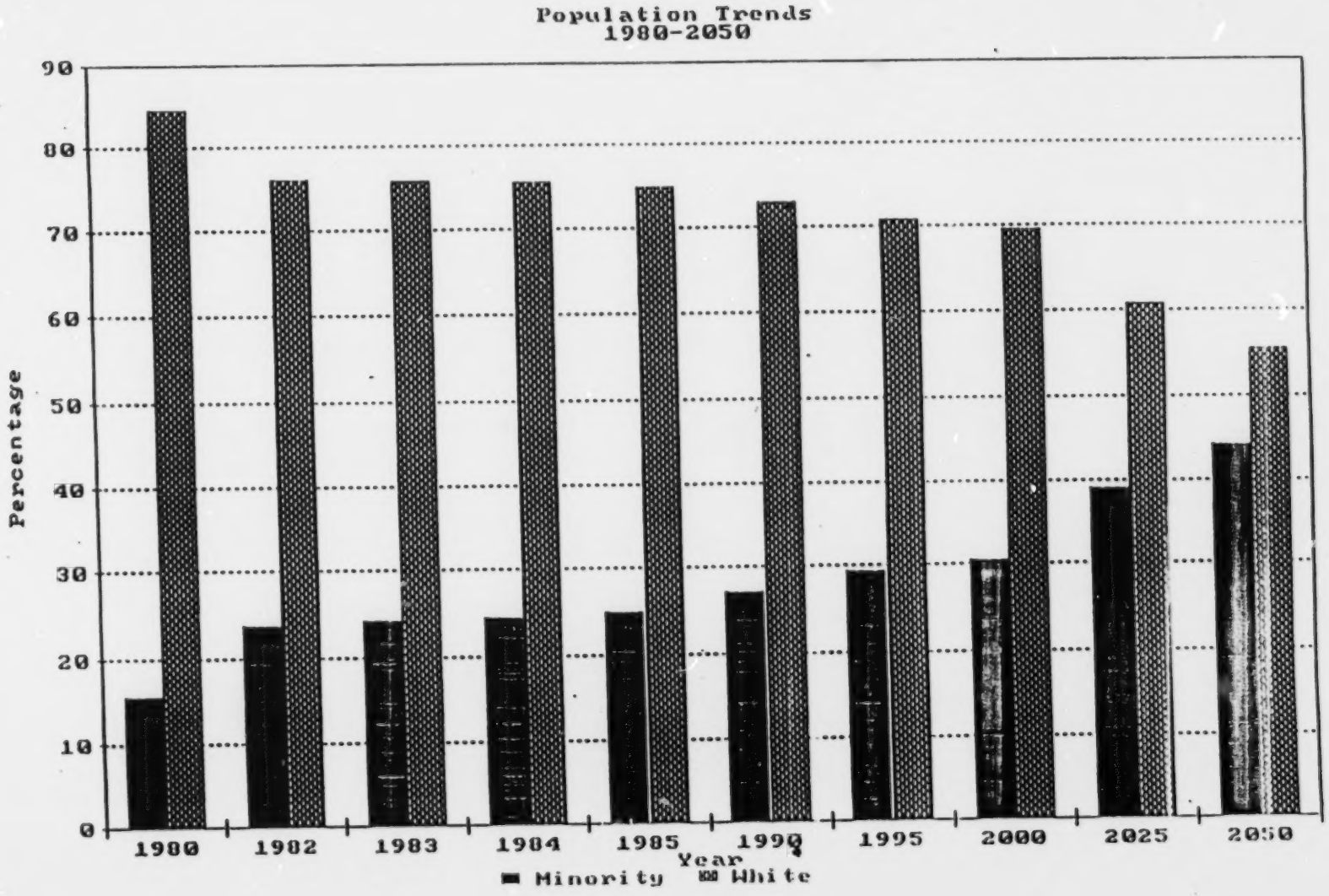
## THE PRECARIOUS QUESTION OF BLACK CULTURAL CENTERS VERSUS MULTICULTURAL CENTERS

During the past forty years, America has been witnessing rapid technological, environmental, economic, political, social, and demographic changes. With predictions in almost every arena for a larger proportion of minorities who will comprise the American population, we can expect even more changes, especially in the racial demography of the American society. As shown in table 1, the disparity between the minority and white population has declined steadily since 1980.

According to Hardy (1991), by the year 2030, an estimated one-third of the people in America will be non-whites and Hispanics, or people of non-European descent -- Asians, Africans, Central Americans, South Americans, and Caribbeans. This directly contrasts the racial composition of the American society today, where an estimated one-quarter of the nation's population consists of minorities and non-whites. Some researchers report also that although minorities and immigrants comprised only 17 percent of the workplace in 1985, by the year 2000, they indicate that this proportion will have reached approximately 42 percent of the American workforce (Sudo, 1991).

Similarly, for school-aged children, Hawkins (1992) notes that "minority students make up roughly 30 percent of this population today" (p. 2). By the late 1990s, however, increases of approximately 15 to 33 percent are projected. What these figures suggest is that more than 30 percent of the students in our elementary and secondary schools by the year 2000 will be

Table 1




Source: US Bureau of Census

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minorities and non-whites or immigrants. These racial, social and the many other changes occurring in our society will undoubtly "affect every facet of American life, from politics and education to the economy and culture" (Hardy, p. 2). One of the important implications of this is that we must better prepare students for dealing more effectively with these changes, and especially with a population characteristic that will become more of the rule than the exception. Although it should be rather obvious, one question that might first come to mind is Why?

Diversity in America is as old as America itself and it is this diversity that has been instrumental in helping America to progress as it has. The growing diversity of people from both the national and international levels, and in other areas as well (gender, ethnicity, religion) is likely to further strengthen our nation. Yet, like most minorities, the new immigrants "will not blend in easily into the American society" (Hardy, p. 2). In addition to many instances of "poverty, discrimination, and prejudices by people who will view them as different and threatening, they will have to learn new languages and new customs (Ibid). As Hardy so nicely indicated, the lens through which they see "American history, culture, and values" are likely to be very different" (p. 2). While this is an expected phenomenon, it is not an accepted or an understood phenomenon.

Stage and Manning (1992) explained that "the cultural lens adopted throughout an individual's history and experiences become a generalized style and way to view the world" (p. 17). This was

further supported by Fellows (1972) who stated that "people of all races, creeds, and colors tend to view the world about them through their own eyes or through the lenses of their own culture " (Ibid.). Fellows continues to state that, if, amidst "the increased numbers of diverse students on campuses, present and future educators" continue to hold to the "time-honored approach of assuming such a reality rather than viewing this perspective as one of the many ways to view the world, they may no longer be guaranteed success" (Ibid). This assertion obviously points to the grassroot: the American society has not yet come to understand or accept the importance of the "cultural lenses" in which people of color bring with them.

Making provisions to meet the needs of minorities and immigrants is "magnanimous and laudable"; it supports the integrity and ideals of America (Princes, 1989). In many instances, however, American's practices in terms of racial, cultural, and religious differences have worked primarily on an exclusionary or monocultural level. If we are to survive in the 21st century and beyond, we can no longer function as such. This is especially true in regards to excluding minorities and immigrants from mainstream America and in conducting our educational systems as though we are still on a monocultural, white, Anglocentric plane (Jenkins, 1982; Bowman and Woolbright, 1989). The stakes are too high. As Peccei (1984) said:

> "Although we may be widely separated geographically, with very different cultures, languages, attitudes, political and

religious loyalties, we will become more interdépendent and interconnected with an ever more close network of vital interlinkages that will condition our relationships with each other for better or worse. Breaking these linkages will no longer be conceivable, for it would throw our whole system into chaos" (pp. 13-14).

Coupled with such economic conditions as budgetary restraints and deficits, increasing diversity in America, including that by sexual orientation, Black Cultural Centers are placed in a precarious predicament. The growing social problems and population diversity have been the impetus behind a trend toward developing a multicultural perspective. As individuals from various ethnic groups see the fruit of Black Cultural Centers and continue to claim more overt identification with their own racial and cultural heritage, we can expect an increase in demand for more programs that may better enable these groups to more adequately address their own particular social/psychological needs.

Given that self-understanding, self-knowledge, and knowledge of one's own historical background lead to personal success, this is not only logical but sensible. Yet, it will occur amidst a slew of social and economic conditions (e.g., limited financial resources, staff shortages, racial intolerance and indifferences, social outcries, etc.) that will place a strain on our social political, governmental, and educational systems. As those responsible for addressing these issues attempt to cope and deal with the conditions and with the needs of the society at large,

they will have to address some difficult questions and make some sensitive decisions.

Although there may now exists greater realization of the value of Black Cultural Centers by educators and other key officials, these persons may feel compelled to merely react to the ethnic outcries before them rather than relying on sufficient information. This paper is designed to enhance sensitivity to the issue of Black Cultural Centers versus Multicultural Centers. The primary objective is to raise consciousness about Black Cultural Centers compared to Multicultural Centers and to provide information that may better enable participants with making more objective and informed decisions about the topic. Philosophical, historical, transitional issues as well as questions that need to be considered, theoretical and program models, and effective strategies for working with culturally different students will be addressed.

## PHILOSOPHICAL ISSUES

Culturally different students are those students who differ from the traditional student population on college campuses. After the Civil War and long before the infamous Brown case, college administrators and faculty struggled with making campuses more amenable and acceptable to these students. Faced no longer with a homogeneous, predominantly white, male student population, they were obliged to attend to the needs of a more diverse, less meritocratic population. Some progress has been made, especially with "recognizing obvious racial, gender, religious, and ethnic

differences among college students and in understanding the relationship between culturally different students' experiences and success in college" (Stage et al., p. 9). However, though "a wealth of efforts and well-deserved good intentions by student affairs personnel and other college officials over the past twenty [to thirty] years have occurred, some deep seated problems remain" (Ibid.).

In most cases, we find that "most policies, decisions, and activities continue to reflect and serve the dominant culture so that for these students the campuses are more readily negotiable" (Ibid.). For minority and culturally different students the scenario is quite different: discouraging findings of their achievement and retention still remain (Stage, et al., 1992). As an example, "fewer African Americans, Latino Americans, and Native Americans attend college and the success rates of those in colleges have not improved" (op. cit.). Stage and Manning indicated that while the "dream of achieving educational equity remain unfulfilled, research shows that the educational climate at predominantly white institutions thwart the academic success for most [minorities] and that incidents of racism reminiscent of the early 1960s plague many campuses" (Ibid.).

According to Giroux (1988), "the visions and plans of higher education continue to foster and reinforce traditional power and privilege while collegiate institutions continue to passively reflect the values and attitudes of the society at large" (Stage, et al., pp. 9-10). The consequences for minorities and culturally

different students are debilitating. Many are "left to serve one another" (Ibid, p. 13). Most of them face "relatively 'piecemeal' retention strategies of 'special programs' that are based on theories derived from research on middle- and upper-class, predominantly Eurocentric student populations that neither meet their needs, nor are particularly applicable to the students for those on whom the research was based" (Stage, et al., p. 10). It goes without saying that indeed, some retention efforts have proven helpful. Yet, as various researchers have indicated (e.g., Stage & Manning, 1992), "past retention efforts haven't adequately proven to be sufficient enough to meet the task of creating a multicultural college environment" (Ibid., p. 11). Creating a multicultural campus environment has thus become one of the latest trends in higher education reform.

Deemed a solution to many of the problems confronting campuses today (Swartz, 1993), discussions have proffered that establishing a sense of multiculturalism in students is just as germane to facilitating their college retention and graduation as is focusing upon the development of their academic, cognitive, and social skills. A panel reporting on the results of a study "on the recruitment and retention problems at selected white schools" stated that "the poor quality of black campus life was the underlying causes of black student attrition" (Young, 1990, p. 17). Many administrators are therefore professing that "the relatively 'piecemeal' retention efforts and 'special programs' are not the answers to what is a more complex and deeply rooted problem"

(Stage, et al., p. 11) . Phillips (1993) added that too many institutions are still taking a "band-aid" approach to retention efforts.

Philosophically, we are indeed "a people composed of diverse cultures, values, and groups but we do not behave as such" (Katz, 1989, p. 2). Furthermore, as Katz stated, "as long as the past must dictate the future, oppression will continue, and until attitudes change, the gulf between whites and blacks will remain and students won't even understand why" (p. 26). By this point in time, however, it should be quite clear, that if we've learned anything from the past thirty or forty years, we've learned that "simply providing an integrated setting is not sufficient enough to promote mutual respect" (Kropp, 1992, p. B3). An increasingly diversified student population, outcries from other minority groups who are vocalizing their desires for a "piece of the pie", continued dismal statistics on the overall status of minority students, and increased incidents of racial intolerance on many college campuses, have thus caused many educators to postulate that multiculturalizing campuses offer a more realistic chance of bringing about real and long-lasting racial stability on campuses and measurable academic and personal success for minority students.

The possibilities suggested by this movement is welcomed. However, a statement made by Vesta A. H. Daniels (1991), associate professor of Art History at Ohio State University, poses another dilemma which the concept of multiculturalism presents for Black Cultural Centers versus Multicultural Centers. In it, Daniels

(1991) stated that:

> The application of multiculturalism goes beyond the mere obvious levels which address 'equal time for everybody' or a trip to the altar of sensitivity to seek forgiveness for one's racist attitudes. In some quarters, the practice of multiculturalism and multicultural education is specious, promising equity and parity but delivering educational materials which dilute the urgency for conscientious curriculum reform.

As an example, Daniels offered that if educators in the City of Chicago state that all 80 or so ethnic groups in the city must be given equal coverage in the public schools, the task becomes overwhelming and meaningless. On continuing, Daniels stated: "moreover, groups such as African Americans who represent about 50 percent of the population of that city and who have been routinely omitted at any substantial level from teaching materials, will progress no further in foregrounding the significance of their political-social-cultural influences on the history of Chicago."

Thus far, this paper has attempted to set the stage for discussion of a delicate issue. In doing so, it has attempted to demonstrate that "a broad sweep of social changes" (Sedlacek, 1987, p. 484) has been occurring throughout the world and the United States since the 1960s. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of the former U.S. S. R., the passage of the North Altantic Free Trade Agreement, and the coming together of the Palestines and the Israeli's are other indices of these changes. With respect to

Blacks, we've seen "a complex mixture of overt repression, social consciousness, political interest, disinterest, and neglect" (Sedlacek, 1987, p. 484). Yet in Pennsylvania, one of the most conservative and racially unchanged states I've seen, is witnessing for the first time in the state's history I believe, a black man who is seeking the gubernatorial position. We can safely portend that even more such developments will occur in similar locales.

As some have noted, during this turbulent, exciting, and changing period, "higher education has gone about its business as usual" (Ibid.). Can we afford to continue to this way? I think not. I believe former congresswoman Shirley Chisholm (1991) explained it when she stated "tradition is no longer the answer to the problems we are grappling with today; tradition on the campus can no longer be carried out when traditions are no longer appropriate to the situation" (Stage, et al., p. 10). A fact which we often forget, is that, when we admit students who differ from the traditional norms, we are "morally and legally obligated to fulfill the promise of an equitable education for them" (Ibid., p. 13). However, "few campuses have reached the point where students of color can successfully integrate without compromising their cultural heritage" (Ibid, p. 13). This sets up our whole future for failure. As Peccei (1984) said:

> "The future which current and succeeding generations must depend on, or fear, will be a 'product of human choice' and a direct consequence of the present and not a continuation of it. Our forefathers may have been able to consider the

future as an extension of their own time but the lessons of the past are no longer fully applicable, and the mechanisms that once automatically absorbed and corrected our mistakes have ceased to function. Thus, to rely heavily on the past for guidance could mean that we venture into the future looking backwards" (p. 10).

In sum, besides grappling with limited financial resources, staff shortages, the need to make campuses more amenable to culturally different students, to adequately address the needs of the larger society, and to respond to calls from many diverse groups, institutions of higher education must tackle some sensitive and difficult questions. Pusch (1979) confirms by saying that "the construction of complementary diversity, the incorporation of more and more diversity into an ever more complex interdependent organizational systems are problems whose resolutions are often sought principally within the public sector" (p. 42). This as well as the issue of Black Cultural Centers versus Multicultural Centers place a heavy burden upon higher education. However, it is a public sector that has traditionally assumed a large responsibility for our social development. If we are to adequately meet the future, this is a burden that must not go neglected. The question of Black Cultural Centers as opposed to a Multicultural Center is a divisive one that often, does not resonate into easy answers. Some questions implied by the issue as well as a brief historical dimension that has led to the topic under discussion follow.

## QUESTIONS THAT MUST BE CONSIDERED

As previously suggested, many questions must be dealt with when addressing the question of Black Cultural Centers versus Multicultural Centers. The questions themselves are precarious, and perhaps, more indigenous to a particular institution than to an across the board answer. Some of the questions include the following.

What is the best way to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population and the society at large in light of limited financial resources? How do you answer the call by so many divergent and diverse groups? "What kind of education does the U. S. society need to revitalize our democracy, transform our economy and fulfill our promise as the first nation to draw large numbers of citizens from every part of the world?" (American Association of American Colleges, 1993, p. 2).

The saying goes that "no man is an island." Our survival as a nation, as a people, and as vital organizations that assist African American students depends largely upon higher education moving from a monocultural perspective to a multicultural perspective (Stage & Manning, 1992). Can Black Cultural Centers afford not to change or continue to exist under this condition? If they must change, are people willing and ready to adapt to the change being suggested by the larger society? If people are ready and willing to accept the change, what financial, political, and social issues must they confront? On the otherhand, if the people are unwilling to make the change, are there fiscal, political,

governmental, legal restraints/mandates by which they are bound? What, if any, are the possible inter/intra-governmental conflicts that must be dealt with before a decision to change or not, is made, and how do we resolve them? Can we know what will be the effect of a move to a Multicultural Center, especially on minority students? Can a viable Black Cultural Center remain effective under an umbrella organization as a Multicultural Center and still meet the needs of African American students? What has been gained by Black Cultural Centers and what, if any, has or will be lost if they do change? If they remain as they are, is this tantamount to segregation in a pluralistic society? Last but not least, if Black Cultural Centers must change, how, why, and to what extent?

This list could go on and on and the questions cannot be taken lightly. At best, they are risky questions whose resolve may be confrontational. Each one must however be dealt with. The bottom line though, is that some change has to take place if Black Cultural Centers are to remain and cope with others to achieve their organizational goals and objectives. Before we delve into making change of any nature, we need to look at the historical context to know "what is," for this is the only way that effective progress can be made. The following pertinent but brief historical background should provide additional insight into the issue of Black Cultural Centers versus Multicultural Centers.

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In an address to a full house at Indiana University of Pennsylvania during October 1993, Jesse Jackson, founder of

Operation Push, president of the Rainbow Coalition, "shadow senator" of Washington, D. C., and a two-time United States presidential candidate declared that "blacks have bettered the nation with the struggle they have bored for freedom, justice, and equality and for the right to vote, to end segregation in schools, and to be treated as first class citizens, as human beings." Although there are those (e.g., Bowman and Woolbright, 1989) who argue that the reforms and the progress made in race relations, in African American issues, and in diversity matters over the past forty years "have been incremental" (p. 24), one can hardly argue against the notion that blacks have helped to make this a better nation. And by whatever name they may be known, Black Cultural Centers were instrumental to this progress.

Yes, "we no longer live in a de jure, segregated culture with 'White Only' drinking fountains and restuarants" (Katz, 1989, p. 2). Education is no longer a phenomena for the priveleged and the more elite. In fact, education is still "the key to the attainment of elevated social and economic status," (Yeakey & Bennett, 1991, p. 12). And yes, it (education) is a primary instrument to achieving what some call "the good life", offering "potentially unlimited access to all citizens regardless of their ability to pay or their previous educational achievement" (Astin, 1982, p. 114).

Supportive of this fact, Ford and Lang (1990) observed that "in 1970, blacks constituted 7 percent of the total college enrollment, but by 1980, this proportion had increased to 11 percent" (Ford and Lang, 1990, p. 149). Similarly, in the same

year "only 31 percent of blacks 25 years old and older were at least high school graduates as compared to 51 percent in 1980" (Ford and Lang, p. 149). Ford and Lang also shared that, "by 1980, eight percent of blacks had completed four or more years of college compared to only four percent ten years earlier" (p. 149). Thus, to say that African Americans have made some long strides is an understatement. These achievements unquestionably reflect the workings of an infinite number of individuals, including many well known figures. However, we would be remised if we didn't acknowledge that Black Cultural Centers played a major role in this development.

Historically, these centers were created for a number of reasons and their role and function have been evolving. They initially arose partly because of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and because of such legislation as the 1968 Higher Education Amendments to the 1965 Higher Education Act, Title IV. But they also arose, because of "the increased enrollment of [black] students on white campuses" (Young, 1990, p. 14) and because of institutions desire to enhance their student retention and graduation rates, which in part, was precipitated by the "revolving door syndrome" (Princes, 1989).

As it has been very well established, according to this syndrome, many minority students who "gained admissions under colleges' open door admission policies found that they lacked the basic skills necessary to be successful in the college curricula" (White & Bigham, 1982, p. 16). Consequently, many of the students

left or were dismissed from the institutions almost as fast as they were let in (Hechinger, 1979; Snow, 1977). While some (e.g, Young, 19900 may state that "minority student centers are a relatively new phenomenon in higher education" (p. 14), Black Cultural Centers as compared to other ethnic cultural centers have long existed and were seen as a partial solution to this retention problem for African American students. In fact, during their initial beginnings, Black Cultural Centers (or houses) were often part of an admission package "that featured Black Studies, minority affairs, special admission programs, and financial aid" (Young, p. 14). How the centers were systematically viewed is another phenomenon.

In some instances, Black Cultural Centers were viewed as "pacifiers that quelled the demands of Blacks for a more relevant total environment" (Young, p. 13). In other instances, they were seen as "temporary bridges designed to help ease the transition of black students into the mainstream of college life" (Ibid). To some, they were "misguided concessions to Black demands by weak-kneed, pseudoliberal whites and seen as a further polarization of the campus constitutencies on the issue of race (Ibid). Although speaking in terms of the broader concept of "minority student centers," Young (1990) suggested that their creation was a reaction "to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr." (p. 14). Perhaps more importantly, Black Cultural Centers were seen by most African American students as "'an island in a sea of whiteness' that offered them a sense of identity and protection in an

environment which they saw as hostile or indifferent" (Young, p. 13). This brings me to another historical point.

African American students were the primary activists for the establishment of Black Cultural Centers. Young strongly affirmed this axiom. He stated that "the impetus for most of the centers was the activism of Black students on white college campuses" (Ibid.). Stennis-Williams, Terrell, and Haynes (1988) also confirmed this in their research.

In discussing the historical development of Black Cultural Centers, we must also note the role of the traditional black colleges. Established basically after "the Civil War," these institutions were "the precursor of Black Cultural Centers on white college campuses" (Young, p. 15). To a large extent, these HBC institutions (historical black colleges) as they are often called, were formed primarily because of the exclusionary tactics employed against blacks in higher education. They have proven thus to be relatively successful agents for retaining and educating African American students. To form fascimiles of HBCs (i.e., Black Cultural Centers) on a micro level on white college campuses is therefore logical.

Besides the various reasons already mentioned, at the very least, Black Cultural Centers were designed to help African American students on predominantly white campuses cope with the alienation, loneliness, and isolation, which so many often felt and still tend to feel. The Centers' role and function were also to assist with the development and enhancement of the students'

racial, ethnic, and cultural pride, preservation and identification. At times, they served as the primary social centers for African American students (Young, 1990). Above all else, they were to be a place where the students could feel more at home on White campuses (Hale, 1988). Hale acknowledged that "to provide a home away from home for [African American] students is as American as apple pie, being not a segregationist concept but a pluralistic one." This brings me to a final point about the historical background of Black Cultural Centers.

Pluralism is at the heart of America and Black Cultural Centers are just another system within this pluralistic paradigm. Yet, many people do not or have not yet come fully to terms with Black Cultural Centers as a pluralist vehicle in a plurlistic nation. This being the case in an increasingly diverse nation is enough of a jeopardy in and of itself for Black Cultural Centers. Regardless of these perceptions however, Black Cultural Centers with their diverse roles and functions are documented precursors of the academic and college success for minority students in general, African American students in particular, and a benefit to all students as a whole, if appropriately administered.

## TRANSITION DYNAMICS

Over the years, many Black Cultural Centers folded while others survived and thrived. Some reasearchers (e.g., Stennis-Williams, Terrell, and Haynes, 1988; Young, 1990) indicated that those who survived took on additional roles. In addition to leadership development of African American students, Black Cultural

Centers began serving as "imparters of Black ideology and values, as cauldrons for Black political thought, and as the crossroads where African, African-American, African-Caribbean, Asians, Europeans met to exchange points of view on neutral to friendly turf" (Young, pp. 17-18). These additional roles reflected a move from mere service orientations to the inclusion of educational orientations as well (Young, 1990). Ironically, this movement may also be a factor that will lead to their demise. For example, as their additional functions became obvious, the value of the centers that assumed additional roles became more apparent (Young, 1990) and thereby, aided their survival and thriving ability. Outcries from other ethnic groups for centers similar to that of Black Cultural Centers for their respective ethnicity also began to appear more frequently.

While these outcries were perhaps facilitated in part by the rise of Black Cultural Centers and by the increasing shift in the population demography to more non-European minorities, Black Cultural Centers were the predecessor to multicultural centers. Stennis-Williams et al (1988) affirmed this when they stated that, "frequently, multicultural centers evolved from black student organizations that became black houses and later, multiethnic student centers for blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans" (p. 74). Thus, while fiscal limitations, increasing population diversity, social outcries, and the need for the development of multiculturalism may have necessitated the establishment of Multicultural Centers, in effect, Black Cultural Centers became

role models and the impetus for other minority student centers.

In 1980 multicultural centers were few in number. On investigating the status of multicultural centers at this time, Stennis-Williams, et al (1988) indicated that they existed "in only three states" (p. 74). By 1989, Mendoza conducted research which showed that "'fully functioning' cultural centers (i.e., ones that were housed in their own building and subsisted on university funding) existed in only 49 colleges and universities" (Wiley, 1989, p. 18). Since then, multicultural Centers have appeared more frequently, and Stennis-Williams, et al suggest that several Black Cultural Centers became Multicultural Centers.

Ironically, this increase in Multicultural Centers parallels the decline in the educational status of minority students in higher education. For example, "although the overall population of blacks in undergraduate collegiate institutions increased from 15.4 percent to 17 percent between 1976 - 1987, the proportion in colleges fell from 9.4 percent to 8.8 percent during the same period and the percentage of total graduate school enrollment in 1984 was only 4.8 percent compared to 6 percent in 1976. This represented a 19.2 percent decrease" (Ford and Lang, p. 149). One can't help but wonder what affect the transition to multicultural centers from black cultural centers has had upon this phenomenon.

Today, establishing a sense of multiculturalism in students is seen as an appropriate approach to tackling such problems as improving race relations, and I would have to agree. However, as with integration, many educators and researchers are now beginning

to realize that while we effected access with integration, minimal was done to change attitudes towards differences (Katz, 1989). So, just by changing from one type of social agent (i.e., from a Black Cultural Center to Multicultural Center) will not solve our problem. Yet as previously stated, researchers appear to now believe that focusing upon multicultural development will move us much farther along the positive continuum of racial relations.

Together with a more appropriate definition of multiculturalism, as the one shown in table 2, and a broader and indepth understanding of the concept as well as implementing "grassroot" actions, this might well be the case. However, regardless of their history, achievement, and effect, Black Cultural Centers are caught in the middle of the transitional maize from Black Cultural Centers to more "politically correct" Multicultural Centers. Should they become multicultural centers, remain stand alone agencies independently, or continue under an umbrella organization called a Multicultural Center which attends to the psycho-social needs of several diverse groups? To stress the point again, this is not an easy question to resolve; yet it also seems that it is becoming moot point. Further, the dilemma is an example of one of the traps that prevents many organizations from becoming truly multicultural and which places Black Cultural Centers at risk of cessation. Katz (1989) stated that "as institutions attempt to focus on their institutional climates, they become concerned with other 'isms.' Addressing all issues of oppression is critical; attempting to cover all of them at once,

Table 2
A Useful
Definition of Multiculturalism

| |
|---|
| A STATE IN WHICH ONE HAS MASTERED THE KNOWLEDGE AND DEVELOPED THE SKILLS NECESSARY TO FEEL COMFORTABLE AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY WITH PEOPLE OF ANY CULTURE ENCOUNTERED AND IN ANY SITUATION INVOLVING A GROUP OF PEOPLE OF DIVERSE CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS (Pusch, 1979). |

however, can result in a superficial intervention" (p. 17).

There is no doubt that we need to confront the many "isms" we now face. It would seem that other than reacting and changing one program type to another, a better approach to confronting the many "isms" institutions are increasingly facing is for "an organization to first work on one or two issues in depth to shift the organizational norms and values, and then address other issues" (Ibid). When this happens, "diversity becomes a part of an organization's fabric and other forms of oppression are more easily recognized and rectified" (Ibid.) and will more easily follow. This is what has happened apparently with Black Cultural Centers, thereby subjecting them to the possibility of demise.

Despite this movement for multiculturalism and the related offshot for multicultural centers, along with many African American students today, many African American faculty from the 1960s and 1970s still contend, (and probably for very good reasons), that Black Cultural Centers should remain as they are (i. e., stand alone agencies) unless additional funds are provided to maintain both a Black Cultural Center and a Multicultural Center. In a

survey conducted in spring 1992 at my institution, 80.2 percent (77 of 96 student respondents) and 82.3 percent (14 of 17 responses from African American faculty, staff, and administrators) suggested that the Black Cultural Center was worthwhile and was providing beneficial services for students and the professional staff. (In both cases, it is noted that two respondents did not respond to the question).

In summer 1993, members of the campus community specifically affirmed that the center should remain as is. At this time, a group comprised of representatives of diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds from the university community, including students, met to discuss the issue of a Black Cultural Center or a Multicultural Center. All members of this group were basically unanimous with the conviction that the Black Cultural Center should remain as a Black Cultural Center. But, they also indicated that the university was responsible for establishing some mechanism, be it a multicultural office, committee, or whatever, to attend to the needs of other minority groups. At the University of Wisconsin, Stennis-Williams and others indicated that it was their institutional environment which agreed on their move from a "Black Cultural Center" to a Multicultural Center. This thus suggests that the answer to the question under consideration so often depends upon the environment in which a center rests.

Be this as it may, the social and economic dynamics occurring in our society suggest a problem for Black Cultural Centers. Although we should be expanding our multicultural abilities at a

time when we are becoming more and more pluralistic, Black Cultural Centers face a danger of extinction (Wiley, 1989). Furthermore, we don't want to confront past flaws faced by similar retention programs. I now turn to some of them.

Past Program Flaws

According to Katz (1989), many special services programs that were designed in the 1960s and the 1970s were simply training interventions that made people aware of the problems but changed their behavior minimally" (p. 7). Black Cultural Centers can be considered as such programs. Pusch (1979) indicated so when he said that these [special services] programs were "basically limited to specific ethnic groups" (p. 54). Arguing further, Pusch states:

> Past experiences with 'special' programs limited to specific ethnic groups (e.g., Hebrew School, Polish School) give little hope that they will influence public school education. Bilingual programs currently in public schools . . . .miss the opportunity to influence the basic curricula if their appeal - political backing - is limited to ethnic minorities (p. 54).

These assertions have profound implications for Black Cultural Centers and the issue of Multicultural Centers. Unfortunately, though, our society has not reached the stage where majority populations, particularly students, will frequently and freely attend, at any significant level, events offered by minority organizations. As we revise and re-evaluate our programs so that they better meet the needs of a rapidly changing society, or campus environment, at the same time, we must also be careful not to

compromise attention to the needs of African American students. This poses one of the greatest threats in a transitional move to Multicultural Centers.

Needless to say, students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds require a "quality" education if they are to adequately meet the challenges of the future. Along with "science and technology, standards of excellence and new knowledge, and preparing students to make wise career choices" (NEA Report, 1992, p. 133), this requires an exposure to diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. In referencing an AACTE (1987) report, Obiakor (1990) explained that:

> A quality education requires that all students be exposed to the variety of cultural perspectives that represent th nation at large. Such exposure can be accomplished only via a multiethnic teaching force in which racial and ethnic groups are included at a level of parity with their numbers in the population (p. 15).

Efforts at bringing about this parity, however, often come from the victim themselves. Reverend Jesse Jackson indicated this in his speech to the Indiana University of Pennsylvania community during fall 1993. He said that:

> "The achievements of blacks as with the 1960s civil rights movement was won by the victims themselves. The struggle for social change, he noted, must be led by the victims. The victims must always accept the challenge of ending their victimization. Slave masters never retire; slaves must change

the slave masters' mind."

Loury (1985) seem to have a similar position, stating that:

> The pride and self-respect valued by aspiring people throughout the world cannot be the gift of outsiders; they must be derived from the thoughts and deeds of the people themselves. Neither guilt or the pity of one's oppressor is a sufficient basis upon which to construct self-worth (p. 11).

A final issue we must consider as we ponder the transition dynamics involved in moving from a Black Cultural Center to a Multicultural Center therefore involves the students themselves. That is, students of today know very little of the past and the racial dynamics that one prevailed, and continue to prevail. They have grown up through a period of integration and racial charade that have led them to believe that all is well that goes well. Mendoza noted that:

> Both black and white students are less concerned about effecting cultural or social change than college students during the political and racial turbulence of the 1960s and 1970s, when most of [cultural centers] were founded. They are more concerned with 'getting their degree so they can get a corvette or a BMW' (Wiley, p. 18).

This poses another serious problem for those involved with Black Cultural Centers. We have to admit that, unless an event is primarily social and recreational in design, we find that the numbers in attendance, (especially by the students on which the

programs were designed to serve), are not as high as we might want or expect. Mendoza conducted research showed that, of the people reached by ethnic cultural centers, "35 percent [of the centers] served blacks only, 10 percent served Latino only, and 10 percent served both groups...." (p .18). In practice, then, what we ultimately find is that often, more majority members than minority members, including students, faculty, and administrators alike, are in attendance at Black Cultural Center events. This is a desirable goal, but we must also reach minority students at the same level.

As with majority students, we must teach minority students to not only tolerate and accept differences but to also value differences. If they are to be adequately prepared for meeting the future they are to face, they too need this knowledge just as much as any other student. However, if minority students don't attend the programs offered by the centers -- programs, I might add, that are designed specificaly for them -- it is difficult to accomplish this objective. Although new and continuing strategies must be adopted to encourage minority student participation, it might mean that Black Cultural Centers must not only re-orient their focus but their target population as well, making its practices and perceptions as being more inclusive of other groups.

For example, staff orientation may need to be changed to encompass broader student participation objectives. In doing this, they may better reach the target population for whom the programs were originally designed and other minority and majority students too. As we further contemplate the issue of Black Cultural Centers

versus Multicultural Centers, examining models of each program type may facilitate the decision. Several such models are described in the following section.

MODELS FOR MULTICULTURAL CHANGE

Knowledge of various theoretical and program models are germane to the issue of Black Cultural Centers and Multicultural Centers. Before setting forth several such models, it must be noted that we can teach students the past but we cannot force them to accept it. Although they are amidst rising incidents of racial and other forms of intolerance, they have yet to come to grips with the reasons behind these incidents. However, Black Cultural Centers have made significant gains along this domain for African American students and other minority and majority students as well. This was evident from a recent incident on my campus.

In this incident, a white student apparently understood an African American student at a party sponsored by a predominantly African American student organization on the campus as saying to the white student "no whites allowed." The student wrote up the incident, submitted it to the student newspaper, and the article appeared in the editorial section of the paper. The content of the article appeared as though an officer of the predominantly African American student organization had made the statement, yet the charging student could never confirm this.

Several written responses were received from students and some were published in the student newspaper. These responses came from students of diverse backgrounds, including African American and

white students. Overwhelmingly, these responses basically indicated support for the predominantly African American student organization. White students indicated that they had attended parties by the organization and some even indicated that they were at the party on the night of the alleged incident. Those students who responded in writing to the newspaper also indicated that the charging student handled the incident poorly, suggesting that the student should have confronted an officer of the organization at the time of the alleged offense.

The Black Cultural Center serves as advisor for the organization and the responses to the article suggest that the work and mission of the Center are extending beyond the African American population. Further, this incident and the response to it suggest that Black Cultural Centers are in a unique position to help facilitate adequate change in racial relations among culturally different students. As previously mentioned, discussions have occurred on campus about changing the Black Cultural Center to a multicultural center. These discussions may have resulted from a realization that other minority groups may request services similar to those provided by the Black Cultural Center, or from a realization that this change may help to better reach majority students. For various reasons, however, varying representatives on campus remain essentially against this move. To sum extent, this appears logical. The following by Katz (1989) explains:

> Organizations do not obtain a multicultural perspective overnight. Those committed to creating change must first have

some believe that serves as an underpinning for their effort. Secondly, organizations need models to help them understand and manage such alterations. These models help key people know where and how to intervene (p. 7).

The following section defines several theoretical models for for bringing about a multicultural environment.

Theoretical Models

One theoretical model for multicultural change was defined by Chin (1985). It is a comprehensive model that incorporates "three crucial dimensions" (Katz, p. 7): institutional role, cultural dynamics, and individual responsibilities. These dimensions along with their characteristics are shown in Table 3.

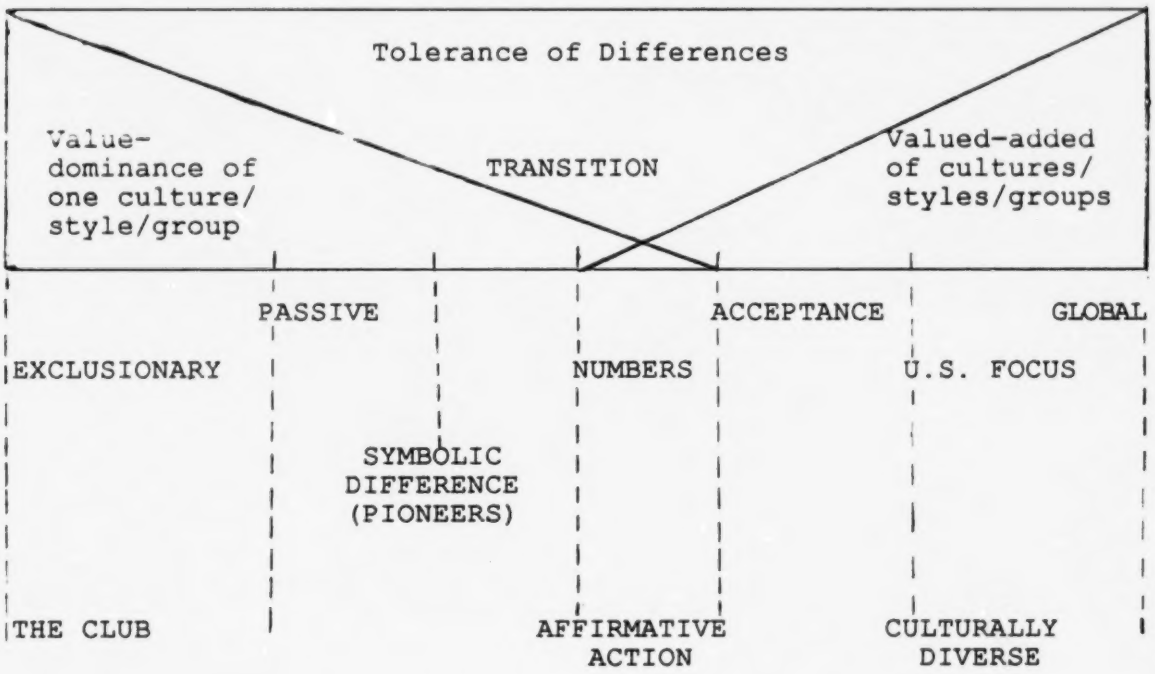
Table 3
Chin's Model of Change

| **Issues** | | **Target for Change** |
|---|---|---|
| Who's in control? | | Structure |
| Decision Making | INSTITUTIONAL | Organization Policy |
| Influence | (Power) | Beyond Numbers |
| Economic | | Empowerment |
| Political Power | | |
| Norms | | Organization Culture explicit |
| Values/Beliefs | CULTURAL | Identify Own Culture |
| Communication | | Appreciate Others |
| Style | | See value-added in others |
| Who Am I? | | Interpersonal Learnings |
| Attitudes | INDIVIDUAL | Individual Awareness |
| Perceptions | | Behavioral Change |
| Impact On Others | | |

This model was developed by Bob Chin and presented at a Human Interaction workshop sponsored by NTL Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, July 1985, in Bethel, Maine (Stage et al., 1989, p. 8).

Jackson and Hardiman (1981) present a developmental model for multicultural change. It "outlines specific developmental phases believed necessary to create a multicultural organization" (Katz, p. 9). Table 4 shows the variables of this model as adapted by Katz and Miller (1986).

**Table 4**
Katz and Miller Model for Developing Culturally Diverse Organizations

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This model was originally developed by Bailey Jackson and Rita Hardiman, 1981 in Organizational Stages of Multicultural Awareness," Amerst, MA: New Perspectives. Adapted by Judith H. Katz and Frederick A. Miller, 1986 (Katz, 1989, p.10).

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Specific Program Models

The Black Cultural Center at Indiana University of Pennsylvania was recently awarded a national Multicultural Award

from the National Assciation of Campus Activities for its efforts in promoting and delivering multicultural efforts. This not only suggests that the center has been relatively successful over the past years, but that it too connotes a modeled program. Its success can be attributed to several factors.

One of these factors may be the primary model to which the Center adheres. This model is a combinational one that includes essentially the stages of a model developed by Jefferson (1989) and the first stage of a model defined by Jones and Costantino (1992).

As shown in table 5, the model contains five stages for achieving multicultural development: Pre-Encounter, Isolate, Inquiry, Contact, and Integration. Stage 1, the "Pre-Encounter Stage," concerns itself with an understanding of "self" and the "limited self-awareness about differences" (Jones and Costantino, p. 1) that characterizes so many people. This knowledge is a necessary prerequisite for change. Stages two through four - isolate, inquiry, contact, and integration - concerns "training and programming" ((Woolbright, 1989, p. 74). While the center pays attention to each stages of the model, it focuses a large portion of its programming upon stages four and five - contact and integration, which, as previously mentioned, are primarily concerned with the specific dimension of "programming." Together, each of the stages of the model is directed towards developing appropriate attitudes to bring about multicultural changes. Overall, this combinational model serves as a framework for most of the Center's programming, services, and operations. As this

## Table 5
## Stages to Developing Multiculturalism: A Combinational Model *

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1. Pre-encounter Stage

   This stage is characterized by limited self-awareness about difference and dependence upon majority group for sense of worth.

   Behaviors and attitudes:

   -attitudes toward the world and self are determined by majority groups' logic.
   -one has dislike for one's own group, emulates majority group.
   -one accepts stereotypes of one's own group.
   -one believes that assimilation is the most effective method for problem solving.

   Student statements:

   "We're all just people."
   "Women are superficial." (By a woman.)

2. Isolate Stage

   Ethnocentricism: Identification with one's own groups, assertion of personal and cultural superiority, denigration of other cultures.

3. Inquiry Stage

   a. Awareness: Acknowledgement of the existence of other cultures.

   b. Understanding: Sorting out of the nature of other groups, recognizing the complex process of culture.

4. Contact Stage

   a. Acceptance/respect: Accepting the validity of cultural differences.

   b. Appreciation/valuing: Putting into perspective the strengths and weaknesses of a culture.

   c. Selective adoption: Trying on new attitudes and behaviors from another culture.

5. Integration Stage

   Multiculturalism: Mastery of knowledge and skills to feel comfortable and to communicate effectively with people of any culture and in any cross-cultural situation.

* Source: Stage 1: Developed by W. Terrell Jones, Ed.D. and Art Costantino, Ph. D. Stages 2-5: Jefferson, Frederick, "Multicultural Education: Diversity in Organizations and Programming." In Valuing Diversity on Campus: A Multicultural Approach by Cynthia Woolbright, ed., 1989, pp. 65-66.

combinational approach would suggest, no one model can accomplish the mission of a Black Cultural Center.

It is further noted that, besides a mission (see Appendix A) which attempts to encompasses each variable of the model, the major dimensions of the center can be characterized as follows: (1) Programming and Services - cultural and educational programs, a workstudy program for incoming educationally and economically disadvantaged students, a resource library, and until funding ended, a satellite tutorial and study skills program; (2) Minority Student Leadership Development; (3) Information Dissemination; (4) Facilities; (5) Administration; (6) Professional Activities; and (6) Evaluation. One must be aware however, that the model one adopts depend basically upon its particular institution and environment.

Summarily, an ideal ethnic cultural center contains such features as a place to study, relax, entertain, eat, and to meet others; a place to getaway from it all; and "a home away from home." It should also include a cultural resource library, an adequately equipped living room and cooking facilities, and a game room. Additionally, Mendoza' found that, "in addition to research on Black and Latino studies, virtually all of the centers in his study provided counseling services, workshops, tutoring, lecture series, film series, dance groups and choirs" (Wiley, p. 18). Appendix B outlines resources of an ideal student ethnic cultural center.

Wisconsin Multiethnic Education Center

Stennis-Williams et al (1988) provide an example of a successful multicultural center: the Multiethnic Education Center at the University of Wisconsin. According to these authors, this center has survived and thrived the 1960s. They stated this was due primarily to policies of the center that "allowed the center to respond to broader goals and constituencies" (p. 79). Like some other multicultural centers, they further note that the Multiethnic Education Center (MEC) "developed from the Afro-American Center" (Ibid.). In continuing their description, the authors also state that "MEC policy focus and philosophy stress cultural pluralism and an appreciation of all cultures" (Ibid.). Knowledge of the features of this center is helpful when attempting to make decisions about a Multicultural Center or a Black Cultural Center. Thus, a more detailed description of MEC follows.

Strategically, during 1980s, "80 percent of MEC programming was devoted to Asian, Black, Hispanic, and Native American cultures" (Stennis-Williams, et al, p. 79). At the same time, state Stennis-Williams, et al, "the center steadfastly maintained the remaining 20 percent for programming devoted to women and European ethnics" (Ibid). In addition, the authors state "the emergent MEC maintained its programming policy (80 percent, 20 percent), focusing on social and cultural activities until the decision was made to become equally academic and student oriented" (Ibid).

In 1978, as the authors continue, MEC voluntarily linked

itself administratively to the College of Education. In doing so, the center subsequently gained the privileges and responsibilities of an academic department, which required it to diversify its programs. The center's services then began to encompass three divergent populations: "academic departments, student service programs, and community agencies."

After a decade of growth in the size of the state's ethnic minority community, Williams, Johnson, and Terrell (1981) conducted research which indicated the need for a program to train teachers and human serivces professionals in the culture and values of ethnic minority groups (Stennis-Williams, et al., p. 80). A one-year federal "Ethnic Heritage Grant" was thus received and "the College of Education and MEC combined the activities of the center, community agencies, and area cultural groups into a center program that prepared and promoted cultural diversity and helped teachers to become culturally sensitive" (Stennis-Williams et al., p. 80).

MEC's success was further aided by "federal and state policies" (Ibid.). However, prior to this, the center had gained credibility by imploring several characteristic features (Stennis-Williams, et al, p. 80). These were as follows:

(1) offering academic courses related to ethnicity;
(2) serving as a required field placement site for teacher corps projects;
(3) developing a children's outreach program;
(4) cosponsoring a series about ethnic heritage for teachers;
(5) securing for the directors, adjunct professor status in two

education department;

(6) accepting invitations for staff to act as guest lecturers in the colleges of Letters and Science and Education;

(7) offering facualty/staff development workshops;

(8) participating in research publications and grant-writing activities.

As the list of activities by MEC suggest, services of a successful multicultural center are broad and encompassing. The reader is reminded however, that this list is only a guideline; they may or may not be appropriate for other institutions. Yet, the MEC program as well as the other models presented in this section, serve either as an example of activities of a successful African-American Cultural Center and of an African American Cultural Center that was transformed into a Multicultural Center. Additionally, all of the models presented in this section provide the foundation upon which to establish, or to further develop an existing ethnic cultural center. Suggested operating guidelines are shown in Appendix C.

Philosophically, "the thrust of cultural centers should be directed toward cultural programming, socio-political issues, academic needs, retention, and exposing whites to minority student concerns" (Wiley, p. 18). In Mendoza's research, which was conducted to determine whether the rise in racial turbulence on many campuses "reflected negative attitudes about cultural centers and minority advocates and whether existing programs addressed critical minority issues" (Ibid.), it was found that "almost all of

the directors" identified the preceding above factors as characteristics of their programs. Together with the operating guidelines, it would serve policy makers well to attend to these factors in their contemplation of a Black Cultural Center versus a Multicultural Center. Additionally, they should also be cognizant of various points about cross-cultural relationships (for an example, see Appendix D). Lastly, they should consider specific strategies that have proven to be successful in working with culturally diverse groups. The following section identifies several such strategies.

## EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH CULTURALLY DIFFERENT STUDENTS

Taylor (1989) described several strategies for working with culturally different students (see Appendix E). Braham's (1989) in "No, You Don't Manage Everyone the Same" (pp. 28-35) also suggested several such strategies. In sum, these strategies can be defined as follows:

1. Be aware of one's own behavior.
2. Acknowledge ones own biases, stereotypes, and prejudices.
3. Avoid assumptions.
4. Recognize, respect, and be knowledgeable of cultural differences.
5. Diffuse myths and stereotypes.
6. Focus on students' academic performance.
7. Know your own cultural environment.
8. Know that you can't manage everyone the same, but that you

manage everyone fairly.

Obviously, there is no gurantee that success will be achieved with culturally different students if the strategies are used. Using them help in developing an open, honest, and trusting relationship with the students. As these factors are historically a measure for success in any relationship, using the strategies thereby increases the possibility that success will be achieved with the students. Moreover, as an underlying principle, the strategies provide a theoretical and philosophical foundation for effecting positive and broader change across psychological, emotional, social, and personal levels. Like the other factors presented in this paper, this too (i.e., a theoretical and philosophical framework) is an issue that must addressed in any discussion about Black Cultural Centers versus Multicultural Centers.

## CONCLUSIONS

The question of whether Black Cultural Centers should become Multicultural Centers is a precarious, divisive one that doesn't resonate easily into easy answers. Many of the programs like the students they are designed to assist are "faltering." There are staff who believes that "their involvement with the centers typecasts them and hamper their likely appointment to other key posts" (Wiley, p.18). This as well as limited funds, budget crisis, staff shortages, and population demographic shifts indicate that those centers that now exist are also "teetering on shaky grounds" (Ibid.).

There are those who believe that if it wasn't for centers as Black Cultural Centers, the "drop out rate for minorities would be a lot higher" (Ibid.). There are those who believe that the centers "can have a positive impact on both minority and majority students" (Ibid.), especially in light of several current social conditions: the increase in racial intolerance on many campuses, rapidly changing technological, economic and demographic changes, fiscal crisis, and growing population diversity. Wiley (1989) even explains that "there is much evidence that underscore the need for more understanding among whites" (p. 18). Some people thus conclude that "there should be a movement to see that the centers that now exist are not lost" (Ibid.). Others, however, believe that we should be developing multicultural centers.

Many questions exist around this issue. The issues range from the needs and dynamics of a rapidly changing society and population shift to strategies of effectively working with minority and culturally different students. In between this spectrum are philosophical and historical questions, programmatic questions, and transition questions.

This paper has attempted to show that the issue is not only a sensitive one but also, that multiculturalism has emancipating potential. As indicated, many "ism" exists but they must be considered one at a time and any changes from\to existing structures must be done vicariously. The needs of no group, and particularly that of African American students, should not be compromised for more politically correct measures.

African Americans have a unique history with many positive aspects that have gone untold. However, they continue to lag behind most groups in almost every arena. Whether an ethnic-specific center or a multicultural center, for survival sake, there is an urgency to meet the needs of African American students in particular. Programmatically, history has shown that, when this is done, the efforts involved spread to the betterment of all.

Theoretical and program models exist to accommodate each program type: Black Cultural Centers or Multicultural Centers. These help with making the issue heuristically functional. This paper has attempted to make this even more so, providing philosophical, historical, theoretical, programmatic, and practical issues that may help with making better, more informed and objectives decisions about a Black Cultural Center or a Multicultural Center, or an inclusive ethnic cultural center.

As indicated throughout the paper however, the overriding answer rests largely with each individual institution. "Multicultural education and programming are indeed essential components in the education of today's college students" (Jefferson, 1989, p. 70). Yet does it make sense to replace a program for a population that continues to lag behind most racial/ethnic groups and a program that impact positively upon all students for reactionary or political reasons? Does it make sense to replace a center that has traditionally and perhaps adequately addressed the issue of racial harmony when "there is much evidence that underscore the need for more understanding among whites"? Or

does it make better sense to develop an inclusive organization (e.g., a multicultural center) that guarantee the same level of historical support to Black Cultural Centers?

Again, the answer rests largely with respective institutions. A decision in either direction, however, must be carefully weighted and considered. For as Wiley indicated, it could be that if it wasn't for Black Cultural Centers, "the drop out rate for minorities could be a lot higher" (p. 18).

Fact Sheet

# The Black Cultural Center

A Division of the Office of Student Activities and Organizations
Indiana University of Pennsylvania

*Mission Statement*

The Black Cultural Center is dedicated to the enhancement of multicultural awareness and racial sensitivity. Through educational, cultural, and social activities and provision of a facility for informal exchange, the center strives to foster growth, development, awareness, and sensitivity among students, faculty, and staff. Through programs and interventions, the center will demonstrate cultural differences while promoting their understanding and appreciation.

*Services of the center include*

- assessing the interests of African-American students in educational, cultural, and social programs and responding to the extent that the number of students, facilities, and resources permit
- providing and encouraging effective advisement of minority student organizations and individual students as needed
- assisting in the orientation of African-American students to the culture of the institution and providing support for those students as they progress through the university community
- providing opportunities and support for African-American students and organizations to develop and sponsor appropriate programs and to otherwise fully participate in the IUP cocurriculum
- providing training in leadership skills and other personal social skills for African-American students and supporting those seeking to assist them
- promoting and sponsoring events which focus on African-American heritage and multicultural diversity

(continued)



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- aiding in the facilitation of academic and multicultural programs and workshops for faculty, staff, and students which focus on
    - awareness of cultural differences
    - self-assessment of cultural awareness and possible prejudices
    - changing prejudicial attitudes or behaviors
- supporting the academic, student development, and programmatic goals of the Office of Minority Affairs, Project Reach, and the Women's Studies Program
- systematically promoting the participation of African-American students for leadership roles in campus governance organizations
- encouraging and acknowledging outstanding accomplishments and contributions of African-American students at IUP
- encouraging and participating in collaborative programming with African-American groups and other university organizations and agencies
- assisting with, identifying, and responding to the specific programmatic and academic needs of African-American students, making referrals to other university offices as appropriate
- providing mailboxes for a limited number of student organizations
- maintaining a resource library of African-American cultural and educational resources (books, magazines, videos, etc.)
- maintaining meeting facilities to accommodate up to thirty-five people and a lounge with VCR and TV
- publishing a biannual calendar of events and newsletter

The Black Cultural Center is open to all members of the IUP community. For further information, contact the center at

1 Lewis House, IUP
Indiana, PA 15705
(412) 357-2455
Fax: (412) 357-6196



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Appendix B

## Characteristics of An Ideal Ethnic Cultural Center

I. Features a place to:

1. Study
2. Relax
3. Entertain
4. Eat
5. Meet Others
6. Get Away From It All
7. Provide A Home-Like Atomsphere

II. Maintains a cultural resource library with:

1. Print materials on respective ethnic-specific literature and history, including journals, books, magazines, and newspapers.
2. Audio/video tapes regarding ethnic-related issues (e.g., African American issues).
3. Typewriters
4. Copying/duplicating machines.
5. Computer/word processors with modems linked to an Academic Computer Center so students can do homework.

III. Contains a living room/lounge area with:

1. Video tape player/recorder
2. TV and stereo system that includes:
   a. Dual cassette player
   b. CD Player
   c. Record Player
3. Jazz and classical records and tapes

IV. Contains cooking facilities that include:

1. Stove
2. Refrigerator
3. Microwave
4. Cooking utensils

V. Houses a Game Room with:

1. Pool/Ping Pong Table
2. Dart Board
3. Ethnic and cultural-specific games
4. Music system

VI. Conducts research on targeted minority groups.

VII. Offers cultural programs: dance, theater, and musical performances (e.g., choirs).

VIII. Sponsors film and lecture series.

IX. Conducts counseling and motivational services as orientation and achievement recognition programs.

X. Conducts racism/cultural awareness and personal development workshops.

XI. Provides tutoring and contemporary personal need services as use of telephones, emergency fund program.

XII. Displays ethnic-specific paintings and artifacts.

XIII. Maintains updated office equipment and decor.

# Operating a Successful Ethnic Cultural Center

Guiding Principles*

1. Establish and maintain credibility
2. Pay attention to details
3. Apply safeguards
4. Maintain public support
5. Make the Assessment Experience Humane
6. A multicultural organization is not static; but is constantly confronting four or five stages (Cynthia Woolbright, 1989).
7. No matter how efficiently a center is ran, an ethnic cultural center cannot function in isolation (Robin Young Burleson, 1986).
8. Multiculturalism offers students cultural experiences which prepare them to be problem solvers and to reduce culture-based conflicts (Vesta Daniels, 1991).
9. Multicultural experiences are important to the academic and social development of all students regardless of their ethnic background (Hawkins, 1989).
10. A quality education requires that all students be exposed to the variety of cultural perspectives that represent the nation at large. Such exposure can be accomplished only via a multi-ethnic teaching force in which racial and ethnic groups are included at a level of parity with their numbers in the population (American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 1987).
11. The pride and self-respect valued by aspiring peoples throughout the world cannot be the gift of outsiders....they must be derived from the thoughts and deeds of the people themselves. Neither the guilt nor the pity of ones oppressor is a sufficient basis upon which to construct self-worth (Lowry, 1985).

*The first five principles are based on Robin Young Burleson, "Running a Successful Center: South Carolina's Project; First Statewide," NASSP Bulletin., January 1986, p. 11-14.

## SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER ABOUT CROSS-CULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS *

1. What seems to be logical, sensible, important and reasonable to a person in one culture may seem stupid, irrational and unimportant to an outsider.

2. Feelings of apprehension, loneliness, lack of confidence are common when visiting another culture.

3. When people talk about other cultures, they tend to describe the differences and not the similarities.

4. Differences between cultures are generally seen as threatening and described in negative terms.

5. Personal observations and reports of other cultures should be regarded with a great deal of skepticism.

6. One should make up one's own mind about another culture and not rely on the reports and experiences of others.

7. It requires experiences as well as study to understand the many subtleties of another culture.

8. Understanding another culture is a continuous and not a discrete process.

9. Stereotyping is probably inevitable in the absence of frequent contact or study.

10. The feelings which people have for their own language are not often evident until they encounter another language.

11. People often feel that their own language is far superior to other languages.

12. It is probably necessary to know the language of a foreign culture to understand the culture in depth.

* From Educational Equity & Human Relations. A workshop presented by Dr. Cornell Morton for the staff of the Division of Student and Educational Services, Frostburg State University, April 29, 1987.

## Tips For Working With Culturally Different Students

Working with culturally different students is a challenge that requires sensitivity and vulnerability. Because of the potential for mixed signals, suspicion and misunderstanding it's important that care be given to how this interaction is to be structured. While do's and don'ts are unnecessary it is important to acknowledge some broad generalizations that may prove helpful when working with racial minorities. If these guidelines are followed you stand a better chance of creating positive interactions.

- Avoid the tendency to lump all minorities together or view them as the same.
- Stress cultural pluralism and celebrate diversity while discarding the notion of the U.S. as a melting pot.
- Watch for stereotyping in language, roles, media and in institutional practices.
- Recognize that by treating everyone the "same" does not mean that everyone is being treated fairly.
- Become familiar with different historical world views that each minority group represents. Although George Washington might be considered an American hero to whites, since he owned slaves he may be considered just the opposite by blacks.
- Develop a contemporary perspective about race and culture. Read minority publications and listen to it's leadership.
- Be more accepting of minority descriptions and perceptions of their life experiences in America.
- Take some risks. Attend activities and events that are sponsored by individuals outside your ethnic group.
- Participate in workshops, conferences and classes that deal with race and culture.
- Involve minorities in the planning of programs.

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